

MONTANA

Department of Commerce

MONTANA PROMOTION DIVISION

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EXHIBIT 5
DATE 2-10-09
HB 51

February 10, 2009

Dear House Fish, Wildlife and Parks committee members:

The Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) is a gubernatorially appointed committee of tourism related representatives whose focus is helping maintain a healthy industry in the state of Montana. The committee represents Montana's tourism interests and asks that you please vote in opposition to House Bill 51 – Make State Park Fee Opt-In, sponsored by Representative Dee Brown.

Montana's second largest industry is tourism. State Parks, sites like Virginia and Nevada City and fishing access sites help support the tourism industry by taking care of that part of Montana that tourists come to experience. The vehicle registration funds are very important to making sure our sites are being well managed. We also do not hear complaints about the current system of collecting the fee.

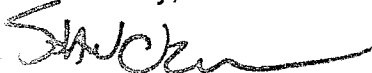
In 2002, the University of Montana completed an economic impact survey of state parks. Non-resident state park visitors had a positive economic impact of more than \$81 million to community economies. That same survey showed that the parks system generated \$23.3 million in personal income to Montanan's and 1,170 jobs were created.

The park system has made significant improvements statewide with these monies and the tourism industry has benefited from better services and facilities provided by having a healthier park system. State Parks is a good partner and works effectively throughout the state to help us build healthy local businesses and make Montana's guest feel welcome while enjoying their visit.

The TAC is concerned that if this bill were to pass, millions of dollars used to fund state parks, fishing access sites and the historic sites at Virginia and Nevada cities would be negatively impacted. As an industry we cannot afford to let these important places be harmed. The current vehicle registration program works well and is being invested well.

Please do not pass House Bill 51. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stan Ozark, Chair
Tourism Advisory Council